



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Law and Order Committee approves amendments to the Election Code

WINDOW ROCK – The Law and Order Committee on Monday discussed Legislation No. 0336-13, which seeks to amend Title 11 of the Navajo Nation Code to authorize the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors to set polling times in special elections only.

According to the report, voting hours in the regular and special elections are from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on election day. The concern is that it may not be compatible with state and county election times that often take place on the same day as a special election.

“The Navajo Nation is located in three states and election times vary, so our office is proposing that under rules and regulations, the election board can choose the opening and closing of voting times,” said Navajo Nation Election Administration program and project specialist Kimmeth Yazzie.

LOC committee members voiced their support, as well as concerns regarding the polling times.

“I think that controlling the polling times might control the voting and how the voters vote,” said LOC member Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock).

Delegate Begaye explained that if polling times were set only during the day, then the majority of the voters would be individuals that are generally older and retired, whereas younger voters who work during the day might not have a chance to vote.

In response to Delegate Begaye’s concern, Yazzie said that the election board would be able to regulate the polling times to fit the schedule of all the voters and synchronize polling times with state and county elections, if need be.

For instance, if a Navajo special election were to end at 7 p.m. and a state election ended at 8 p.m., the polling site would remain open until all elections have ended.

Yazzie said another issue regarding special elections is single-candidate elections, in which they are presumably guaranteed the winning seat, which poses a detrimental effect on financial resources.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichii, Steamboat) suggested an amendment to the legislation for the election board to also create rules and regulations for single-candidate special elections.

LOC voted 2-0 to approve the amendment.

“This legislation would allow NNEA to save costs on special elections, as well as give Navajo citizens an opportunity to exercise their right to vote,” said Delegate Shepherd.

At the conclusion of the meeting, LOC voted 2-0 to approve Legislation No. 0336-13. The legislation now goes to the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee for consideration.

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